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OO RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHCI #0040 0311307
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 311307Z JAN 08
FM AMCONSUL KOLKATA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1858
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE USD FAS WASHINGTON DC
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE 0083
RUEHRN/USMISSION UN ROME IMMEDIATE 0012
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 2272

UNCLAS KOLKATA 000040

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DEPT PLS PASS TO HHS-STEIGER AND HICKEY AND CDC - COX AND BLOUNT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KFLU](#) [TBIO](#) [EAGR](#) [SENV](#) [CASC](#) [AMED](#) [PGOV](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: AI IN W. BENGAL - SITREP 14

REF: KOLKATA 38 AND PREVIOUS

[11](#). (U) SUMMARY: On the evening of January 30, W. Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee chaired a digital video conference with all of W. Bengal's district magistrates and senior health and ARD officials to discuss improving coordination in the state's avian influenza (AI) response efforts. The GOWB also decided to set up committees to disburse compensation to villagers for poultry. On January 31, reports of poultry death came in from additional villages in Birbhum and Hugli districts. Culling in these areas will begin February 1. END SUMMARY.

[12](#). (U) On January 30, Chief Minister Bhattacharjee held a digital video conference with all of W. Bengal's district magistrates and senior health and ARD officials to discuss improving coordination. Bhattacharjee urged ARD and health officials to quarantine cullers showing signs of illness and to administer Tamiflu and other supportive care for the cullers. Possibly responding to the allegations of corruption in the compensation scheme, GOWB officials decided that a committee will be formed in each block to disburse compensation (previously compensation was in the hands of one local official). Local administrators and community leaders will be included in the committee to ensure transparency.

[13](#). (U) As of January 30, 45 administrative blocks and five municipalities in 14 districts of West Bengal have been affected by the AI outbreak. On January 31, there were reports of poultry deaths from Chanditala in Hugli district and also from Siuri (Birbhum). Media reports say culling will begin on February 1 in these areas.

[14](#). (U) The Chief Medical Officer of Health for North 24 Parganas district told post that the GOWB has scheduled the Salua village of Baduria, which reported 4,000 poultry mortality on January 29 (reftel), for culling. There were no reports of people falling ill in the area, however.

[15](#). (U) 1.84 million people came under surveillance through January 30. During these door-to-door surveys, about 4,000 people were found to be suffering from fever, which is roughly 0.21 percent of the total population. A senior health department official expressed satisfaction at the ratio, pointing out that it was well below accepted tripwire levels. The number of human samples tested for the H5N1 virus remained at 18, with all samples returning negative for H5N1.

[16](#). (U) Comment: Despite the efforts at improving coordination,

some problems remain. For example, on January 29 municipal authorities in Kolkata's Salt Lake neighborhood imposed a ban on poultry trade although Salt Lake reported no mortality. On January 30, media reported that the GOWB had ordered the Salt Lake Municipality to withdraw the ban because of the lack of actual bird deaths. On January 31, the ban was lifted. The incident reveals the difference within GOWB departments in how to best manage prevention efforts.

JARDINE